POLITICAL REPRESSION, U.S.A.

Every society, or those who control it, define some ideas and forms of behavior as acceptable and others as dangerous, anti-social and unacceptably deviant. The struggle of the Movement in the U.S.A. might be described as a struggle to change the definition of what constitutes dangerous, anti-social, and anti-human behavior in this society with the resulting capacity to enforce such decisions. The point is that not only does this society repress much action which is social and human; it also naturally fails to repress much behavior, including price-fixing, exploitation, murder, and war, which is anti-human and anti-social.

In a capitalist society it is always difficult--indeed impossible--to repress material greed, acquisitiveness, and avarice because the system and its ideology require and institutionalize such behavior. There is, then, always a conflict between the people and the "law" which is imposed upon them.

Especially in times of social change and turmoil such as the present, law is always on the defensive, attempting to hold the system together for the powerful who own and seek to perpetuate their control. Their response as we have seen time after time is to pass essentially ex post facto laws every time the Movement increases its effectiveness. The Stokely Carmichael anti-riot act under which the Conspiracy is being tried is a classic example of such reactionary legislation. The same is true of anti-riot laws passed by every state following the ghetto insurrections of the mid-sixties, and the campus uprisings of the late sixties.

It is clear that repression of political ideas and organization is usually in direct proportion to their success and popularity. Whenever a tactic is found which is successful, it is never long before a law is passed against it.

Every effort is made by the men in power to persuade the people that responsibility for the inevitable disorder, insecurity, and confusion rests not with the powerful but the powerless. For example, in the case of the Conspiracy, it is essential to the Democratic Party, the City officials in Chicago, and others who were embarrassed by the events at the 1968 convention that they find someone other than themselves to blame. They have chosen the Conspiracy to divert blame from themselves.

As the killing of Rector, Fred Hampton, Mark Clark, and innumerable Third World Revolutionaries and activists shows--the methodology of repression will continue to intensify. Desperation will set in. The deepening crisis of the existing social order is such that the "American way of life" will have to be destroyed in order to preserve the Amerikan way of power. The psychology of Vietnam, "We had to destroy the village in order to save it," will increasingly dominate as the tactic of discouraging unacceptable action become more extreme.

Whether political or non-political, death is the ultimate repression. Those considered the most dangerous are killed; systematically and haphazardly, spontaneously and with great calculation. Death and physical injury come to individuals, peoples, organizations, and nations in proportion to the threat they present to the interests of the more powerful. There are other adverse consequences which can be imposed. They range from confinement and economic deprivation to social exclusion, ridicule, and embarrassment.

Imprisonment of many kinds is a traditional method of isolating the "deviant" from others who may be contaminated by his ideas. More importantly, imprisonment sets an example that some acts are intolerable. That is, of course, one of the issues in the Conspiracy case and any political trial. It is intended to show that one cannot struggle with any degree of success against the existing political order with impunity.

Whatever the forms and methods, whether legalistic or extra-legal, violent or non-violent, economic, social, political, or military, repression in the U.S. will increase. As in Wilmington, Delaware, where the national guard occupied the black community for 9 and a half months; or the daily occupation of ghettoes by police, licensed to kill Bobby Hutton, or Michael and John Soto; or in prisons which hold Bobby Seale and Martin Sostre and John Sinclair and the Panther 21; whether on campuses or ghettoes or communities, we must be prepared to resist.

But fighting repression is never an end in itself. Every revolutionary movement provokes a counter-revolutionary response. The concept of a struggle which neither sustains nor inflicts casualties is contradictory and absurd. By fighting as the Conspiracy and others are doing, we defy and deflect the purpose of repression-Intimidation. That is how we become irrepressible. And that is how we gain the capacity to control the truly dangerous, anti-human, and anti-social forces which control this society.

Condensed from an article by
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